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The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

● MAY-JUNE 1991

MEETING GOD AMONG THE DESERTED



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MAY-JUNE 1991

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25 Years Ago!

It reminds us that God means there to be a society, a fellowship which, by the quality of its interrelated life, shows the nature of God and his purpose for the whole of creation. The keywords are love, reconciliation, and peace. They describe first the relationship between God and those men and women who, in Jesus Christ his son, have received the right to become God's children. But they describe no less the relationship which ought to exist among those who are God's children, who in Christ are brothers and sisters.

—Churchman, 1960

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THE 1991 ELECTIONS



The elections to the tenth Lok Sabha will be remembered as the most violent elections ever fought in India. The politics of Communalism and Casteism played a vital role. There was an unprecedented cult of violence all over the country. In some areas the voters were threatened with dire consequences if they do not boycott the elections and the governments in those states failed to infuse confidence in the voters. It was difficult for many to exercise their franchise freely without any intimidation which resulted in the record poor turn out of voters. Literally hundreds of people have lost their precious lives, including the untimely murder of Rajiv Gandhi.

The myriad doubts in the Indian Public mind about who had plotted the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi have now led into a strong suspicion that the crime was the handiwork of hostile foreign forces and disruptive internal elements. It was a multilayered conspiracy with international ramifications. The elimination of Rajiv at a time when he was on the way to regain power was a diabolical act.

The poll verdict could be interpreted as a fact that it will take a long time for the desperate Opposition parties, professing divergent ideologies to emerge as a national alternative to the Congress (I). The nation paid a heavy price for the conceptually attractive but practically disastrous coalition rule at the Centre. The fall of the coalition within a period of one and half years has convinced most people in the country that another coalition would mean another bout of economically and politically ruinous political instability. Even the bitterest critics of Congress (I) now pragmatically admit the necessity for a strong government.

The assertion of the anti-establishment vote, the widespread revulsion against leaders who change Party loyalties frequently, the neutralisation of the Mandal factor and the penetration of the B.J.P. in new areas are some of the highlights of the elections.

The party which has reason to be most happy over the outcome of the polls is undoubtedly the B.J.P. which is the second largest party in the Lok Sabha. Yet, it is this party which has been the worst victim of the anti-establishment vote in the very states under its control. In Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Haryana, the non-performance of the incumbent governments was a major input in the B.J.P.'s loss of seats to the Congress. The Ram Mandhir and Hindutva campaigns of the B.J.P. proved effective in U.P. and Gujarat. It is interesting to note that the B.J.P. put up Ms. Deepika, the 'Sita' of T.V. Ramayana serial and Mr. Arvind Trivedi, the 'Ravana' not 'Rama' and both 'Sita' and 'Ravana' won the battle! But the party cut no ice in the other states, nor was able to stem the pro-congress tide in the Hindi belt. The poll outcome has, therefore, demonstrated that local compulsions in the psyche of the voters has played a significant part. The broad conclusion is possible consequently that none of the two predominant sentiments—the mandal and mandir—operated uniformly at the national level. However, together they succeeded in dividing the vote banks to such an extent that for the second time in less than two years, the verdict produced a hung Parliament. The centrist forces should come together on a minimum agreed agenda on vital issues like economy, education, health and price control. This proposal is not all that irrelevant in the present context when national priorities have been put to on the backburner.

Some leaders of non-Congress (I) parties, being fed up with frequent elections and the consequent depreciation of our democracy, have offered to extend support to the Congress (I). Thus a great responsibility is laid upon the shoulders of the Congress (I). Hence the need for the Party to prove equal to the task by filling the void created by the assassination of its charismatic leader, Rajiv Gandhi. If our Parliamentary democracy cannot deliver the goods there will be more anarchism and terrorism. The unanimous choice of Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao for the highest

office for the first time from the South, is laudable as is that of a seasoned Politician, a Philosopher, linguist and an author.

We congratulate him and pray to God the Almighty to strengthen the government, and all parties so as to strive to establish a just society so that a strong and secular democracy be established.

—DASS BABA

REFLECTIONS ON MINISTRY

THE COACH AND THE PLAYERS IN GOD'S MINISTRY

In one of our Clergy Conferences someone was narrating all the things he was doing in his congregation with a certain amount of pride. Very laudable things like extending the church building, renovating the parsonage, increasing the income, visiting houses regularly, etc. 'God is blessing my Ministry', he said with genuine joy and gratitude. I wondered, if it was *his* Ministry and if it was real *ministry*.

We did a Bible Study then on Eph. 4 : 1-12. St. Paul says there that apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors are all God's gifts to the Church 'to equip God's people for work in his service' (NEB) i.e. to do the Lord's Ministry. This is the foundation verse for a theology of ministry of the laity.

Someone pointed out that the position of the comma in that phrase (as some translators have it) could change the meaning whether the ministry belongs to the company of apostles and others, or it belongs to the people of God. A decisive comma to determine the meaning of ministry. (There were no punctuations in the original Greek text.)

In the study it became clear that it is all God's people who are called to do ministry. That is to say that ministry belongs to the laity and not to the clergy. In fact, *Laos* includes the whole people of God, including the ordained clergy. Clergy is only a sub-species of laity.

The role of the pastor is to equip and to train the members of the congregation to minister. The role of the members is to minister to the needs of the people in the world. This happens mainly in the context of everyday life, homes and neighbourhoods, offices and factories, schools and colleges, prisons and hospitals, in the field of politics and business where committed service, honest work, life of integrity make a difference. These

are the situations for Christian witness and service. It is in these areas where Christians have to work for human dignity, and social justice. In this sense, the laity are the primary ministers and the pastors are only auxiliary ministers.

We may say that the clergy's ministry is mainly in the church and the Christian's is primarily in the world. The former is an 'enabling' ministry, the latter is a 'doing' ministry. Whatever happens inside the church should be only an enabling process to the actual ministry in the world.

I like the parable of the Coach and the Players in a game. The coach is not a player; he need not be a good player. He must know the rules of the game, and must be able to instruct how to play well. He keeps the team together and inspires them to do their best. When the real game happens, the players are in the playground, the coach watches from outside. When his team wins he rejoices, when his team loses he agonises. The quality of the training is tested in the playground and not in the coaching field. The role of the pastor, then, is to make available theological and faith resources to the laity, to help their daily witness and keep them inspired by the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is often difficult for the clergy and the laity to accept this paradigm. Such a perspective will put our present understanding of ministry upside down. Will the clergy come forward to accept this modest role graciously? Will the people of God rise up to take up this challenge seriously?

SAM AMIRTHAM
Bishop

PROMOTE LIFE

DR. GNANA ROBINSON

' Seek me and Live '

' Seek the LORD and Live '.

Amos 5 : 4,6

It is not an exaggeration if we say that the whole Bible as to do primarily with the question of life and death. Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life ; and the man became a living being ' : thus begins the biblical history of the humankind. According to the all-account in Genesis, the first humans—Adam and Eve—by the misuse of their freedom, lost the God-given true life, the eternal life and thus death became the lot of humanity for ever. There began the saving act of God, according to the Yahwistic writer, which finds its consummation in the cross of Jesus. The prophets of the Old Testament stressed consistently that Yahweh alone is the living God capable of giving life to humankind and that the gods of the other peoples have no life in them and that they are breathless, lifeless stones or pieces of wood. To follow Baal, Dagon, or one of the other gods meant therefore death for the people ; but to follow Yahweh, the true God of life, meant life for them.

Life goes together with goodness and death goes with evil. According to the Deuteronomistic writer, God places both good and evil, both life and death before humankind for their choice ; ' See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil.....I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse ; therefore choose life, that you and your descendents may live ' (Deut. 30 : 15-19). That in fact meant for the Israelites the choice between Yahweh, the God of life, and the other gods, the gods of death. Loving Yahweh, obeying his voice and cleaving to him meant life to them (Deut. 30 : 20). So, Joshua asks the Israelites to make a choice between Yahweh and other gods ; but as for him and his house, they will serve only Yahweh (24 : 15), because they know for certain that Yahweh alone is the true God of Life (cf. Is. 16 : 11 ; 21 : 4 ; 34 : 22 ; 42 : 8 ; 103 : 4). Jeremiah too affirms that the LORD sets before his people ' the way of life and the way of death ' (21 : 8). To follow the LORD is obviously to tread on the way of life ; but to follow one's own will or the ways of other gods is to tread on the way of death.

What does it mean to follow the LORD ? According to the Deuteronomist, it means ' loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him '. This in effect means walking on the way of righteousness. According to the Bible, the wicked, the godless ones are the unrighteous, who threaten life and cause death in the community. Therefore Isaiah exhorts the people to abstain from doing evil, but to ' learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression ; defend the fatherless, plead for the

widow ' (1 : 17). According to Michah, Yahweh has already shown his people the way of life. ' to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God ' (6 : 8).

But, in spite of all such warnings, the Israelites chose death, says Amos. All of them have forsaken Yahweh and followed the gods of death. They refused to cleave to the LORD and obey his voice ; consequently they treated on the way of unrighteousness and there were corruption, exploitation, oppression and death in the land. An unjust socio-economic system and an oppressive political order cause the death of many innocent, just people in the society. The wicked in the society of Amos' days sold the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes and they trampled the head of the poor into the dust of the earth (2 : 6, 7). They stored up violence and robbery in their strongholds (3 : 10). Therefore death became their lot. Amos saw no hope for the continuance of his society which begot death ; he could foresee only its total destruction : 'that on the day I punish Israel for his transgressions....I will smite the winter house with the summer house ; and the house of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall come to an end ', says the LORD ' (3 : 14, 15). The Society with all its extravagances—summer houses winter houses and holiday resorts—all made possible through the gains of injustice—would go down with its people.

Amos is obviously a member of this death-begetting society ; he is caught up in its unjust socio-economic order and bears the collective responsibility for it. He is therefore prepared to go down with this society with all its death-begetting systems. This, however, does not mean that Amos should resign from the society and keep silent in the face of injustice and death. As one who has chosen for himself the God of life, he will plead for life and do all that he can to fight against death and to promote life. He thus becomes the bearer of the irresistible word of this living God : ' The lion has roared ; who will not fear ? The Lord God has spoken ; who can but prophesy ? ' (3 : 8).

The only hope for the future of the people lies in their seeking of the LORD, the only source of life : ' Seek the LORD and live '. What does this ' seeking ' mean for Amos ? Making pilgrimages ? Offering costly sacrifices ? Observance of temple worship ? Celebration of religious feasts and festivals ? No. ' But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream ', says Amos (5 : 24).

The God of Israel is not one who is eager to receive offerings and sacrifices from Israel; he wants rather that Israel receives from him justice, righteousness, truth and kindness. He wants them to receive life from him. In this Amos builds the bridge to the New Testament.

As the death-begetting sinful society comes to end, a society (Kingdom of God) of new life is introduced with the coming of Jesus: 'In him was life and the life was the light of men' (John 1:4). In Jesus all evils come to an end. Greed, oppression, contempt of truth and all actions that come out of fear have only death as their future. The only hope for the people lies with Jesus: 'Seek me and live'. The water that Jesus gives becomes in those who drink of it 'a spring of water welling up to eternal life' (John 4:14). Jesus is 'the bread of life' which satisfies all hunger and quenches all thirst (John 6:35, 48); he is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6); he is 'the resurrection and the life'; one who believes in him, 'though he dies, yet shall he live', and whoever lives and believes in him shall never die (John 11:25, 26). Jesus, who gives life to all, is not interested only in our eternal life, the life after death; he is equally interested in our bodily, this worldly life. He saw the bodily death as the natural and inevitable end of our bodily life on earth; this is evident from the fact that he himself accepted bodily death in his earthly life. But he certainly did not accept as normal premature deaths caused by handicaps, diseases and other socio-economic and 'political circumstances'. All his healing miracles are signs which show that Jesus wanted to restore and promote life in men and women; 'I came that they may have life, and have abundantly' (John 10:10).

Jesus asked the Pharisees a decisive question:

'Is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?' (Mark 3:2-4)

To do good is to promote life; to do harm (evil) is to destroy life. Jesus would do everything possible to promote life. In this Jesus has given us a criterion for our actions in this world, a criterion for our dealings with our fellowmen and women in the society.

Every one of our actions can either strengthen the forces of life or strengthen the forces of death. There is nothing which can be characterized as 'neutral actions'. One's inaction and silence in the face of an issue that affects the life of people (e.g. Gulf war) do in effect actually justify and support the forces of death and affirm and strengthen an unjust institution (e.g. war) or system. Jesus therefore demands of us our active involvement in the struggle against the forces of death, which means an active discipleship to Christ. Doing the will of God in every sphere of our life is what God expects of us (cf. Matt. 6:10; 7:21). God's will is obviously to save life, and not to kill.

'Seek me and live'; These words of God through Amos come to us today anew calling us for active discipleship to Christ, at a time when forces of death such as poverty and hunger, injustice, oppression and exploitation and communalism—religious, racial, ethnic, caste, etc.—and wars threaten life all over the world. The resurrected Lord calls us to abide in him and to go through the process of his death and resurrection and to align ourselves with the forces of life and to transform every situation of death into situations of resurrected life accompanied by reconciliation, justice and peace.

'Seek me and live', says the LORD.

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AFFIRMING ONE ANOTHER*

BISHOP P. VICTOR PREMASAGAR, *Moderator*

Today is St. Barnabas day. The Church celebrates today this great man. The way in which he is introduced is noteworthy:

'For Barnabas was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith....'

Acts 11, 24.

His real name was Joseph but he was such a positive man, man who was always coming positively when there were issues faced by the church. The early church affirming his services, conferred on him the title Barnabas — Son of Consolation, *Parakleseos*, one who comforts and consoles. The name was given by the Apostles, almost giving him a title of *Canon* or the *Very Reverend*, the *Arch-deacon*. I often think that some of us should seriously be concerned about those who could not make it. I have become a Bishop and called the *Right Reverend* and now the *Most Reverend*. Many pastors of my age are without any proper title and recognition of their ministry. If there is any senior presbyter (like Rev. Gnanavachagam) here he goes on like a presbyter only. We have no way of affirming our elders. The Madhya Kerala diocese is still calling very Reverend, Canon and so on. They want to affirm the services and ministry of their elders in the church. I often think that the church should come out to affirm its people. Presbyters of twenty or thirty years of service should be recognised in a special way and their ministry should be affirmed. They could be given titles like the *Very Reverend*, the *Reverend Ghanam* and the *Reverend Ghanam Acharya* or any other titles that would recognise and affirm their faithful ministry in the church.

Jesus also affirmed people. He called Simon, Peter. He could have allowed him to be called as Simon and he would have gone on with that name but Jesus says, 'no, you are Peter the Rock'. Jesus affirms him. Barnabas was such a man. The man who positively responded in his life and in the church. They gave him the title of Holy Spirit — *Parakleseos* is the Greek word that was used.

Barnabas was a layman. First time he goes out and sells out all his property and comes back. Probably this was the young man who went to Jesus and asked him as what he should do to inherit the eternal life.

Jesus asked him to go and sell all of his property, give it to the poor and come back to follow him. But at that time he was not sure. It occurred to me that this man would not have gone simply to sell all his properties. Whether Barnabas is that young man is the

question. Soon after the Crucifixion and Resurrection, he probably changed his mind and came back to the Apostles. In fact nobody had asked him to sell out his properties, but he did it voluntarily, perhaps remembering what Jesus had asked him to do. People began to see as the gospel came to them they were trying to live it out. And this is the way Barnabas chose. The church affirmed this man when they heard that the Greeks who accepted Christ and were persecuted because of their faith, formed into a church. They were wanting a person to look after them and they requested perhaps Peter and John to name a person. The Apostles decided to send Barnabas, the man who had already proved to be positive in his goodness. This is the fruit of the Spirit. Even the very character of God is the goodness.

'I will make all my goodness pass before you....'
(Exodus 33, 19).

A Telugu lyric portrays this in a wonderful way:

Knowing that no goodness will come out of me and in order that you may increase goodness in me beyond imagination, you loved me, O Lord.

Barnabas's real name is Joseph. It means 'added' — one more is added. He goes unasked and sells all his property, brings the money and lays it at the feet of the Apostles. He did not seek any special recognition for his act, did not even say, 'Here I brought it for the Lord, take it.' Nothing is mentioned there but he simply comes and lays it at the feet of the Apostles. This positive goodness is seen in this man.

The second thing about Barnabas is that he is full of the Holy Spirit. In Bangladesh when I spoke on the holy Spirit a question was asked. Holy Spirit is said to be 'Wind' not water, then, how can it be poured or filled? Probably they were thinking of a pot with water. There are two ways of filling water in a pot. Little water could be brought up by putting pebbles in it as the crow did in the story. Very often we appear to be full, but there are stones inside. The Spirit has not really transformed us. Outside we might appear to be full but much less inside. The whole thing should be filled with the water — the Holy Spirit — no stones, nothing negative in him, filled with the grace of God. Filled with the Spirit indicates being always on the edge of life. Unless the Holy Spirit guides you, you cannot go and sell all your properties and keep the money at the feet of the Apostles. He was so filled with the Spirit of God that the fruit of the Spirit blossomed and bore fruit in him. Let us affirm the good that is there. None of us are perfect, but we should learn to affirm one another. That is the sign of having the Spirit. No wonder when the church in Antioch asked the Apostles, they sent

* This was the Bible study conducted on St. Barnabas day at the Kodaikanal consultation held in May '91.

Barnabas. We want this man, full of the Spirit the man who is able to comfort, strengthen and affirm.

The other characteristic mentioned of Barnabas is faith. This word, faith, has a special significance. Martin Luther expounded this in his *Preface to the Romans*. When John Wesley read this section he had his conversion experience. I read it again when we celebrated John Wesley's 250th Anniversary of his conversion, to ascertain as what was the thing that attracted John Wesley. Martin Luther explains that faith is not something we do. But the gracious act of God in the innermost life of a believer. It is God's action. God bringing about faith in you so that you are completely transformed to the extent, that you voluntarily start doing things being filled by the grace of God. That is what St. Paul meant when he talked about faith. It is the actual transformation of the person so that faith becomes part of his life. Martin Luther goes on explaining about faith. When this happens in you, you do not grudge. I was preaching on this in our congregations in that year. The illustration I often used in the village congregations is this. Suppose somebody puts a thousand rupees on the table and forgets. If people are there I would say to myself, if no body is there, I would have taken it. This kind of feeling, because we are afraid of others that will see us, Martin Luther calls it as hypocrisy. But once God's gracious act begins to work in us, we are no longer hypocrites. That is the life of faith. Even if nobody sees we would be straight. The village people recognise this way of being tempted. I do not want to do it because everybody is seeing. That grudging, tension and struggle are taken away when the grace of God acts in you. You will be free of hypocrisy and tension. You are just a positive person. Barnabas was such a man, he was good, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. Faith is the quality of life it is not quantity. If you are really transformed you act positively at all time. When the Disciples asked Jesus to increase their faith he told them about the mustard seed that a little faith is enough. These are the qualities of discipleship.

Friends, we are Bishops, pastors and lay leaders of the Church — men and women. It is this type of Barnabas we need in the church. Look at him, He goes to Antioch and people are added to the church. We often hear people saying, 'but for me these people would not have been converted'. But this man runs to Tarsus and gets Saul. He could have done it himself. After all the Apostles in Jerusalem sent him, but he wants to find others, affirm them. He thinks of Saul as an expert in the Law and a great preacher. He knows his Greek. That

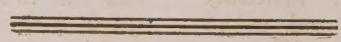
is why he goes all the way to Tarsus and brings him. Both of them began to work. Their work was so effective that the disciples for the first time were called Christians in Antioch. What a man Barnabas was !

How can we affirm one another ? Ayya, if I am not there the whole Congregation will go away — people always say this. We do not want to affirm others. There are many people who are capable. We are not selfish that we do not want to affirm the capable people. When we work as leaders of the Church we do not see to work as a team. We discredit one another. Very often we are troubled about the leadership. That becomes detrimental to the Church, indeed it is a curse to the Church.

Barnabas was not an Apostle. He was a lay person. The Apostles affirmed Barnabas, the layman, later serve at the table. The lay people were given participation in the ministry of the Church. The training of the lay persons in the Diaconal Order was a serious attempt by our church to include lay people in the ministry. We have not affirmed the gifts of the Spirit given by the Lord to our People. We could have them as Readers, Preachers, assisting in the distribution of sacraments and giving leadership in their own professions being witnesses of the gospel. We can have them as members of the Diaconal Order, the Order of St. Barnabas, the Order of St. Luke and for the young people the Order of St. Mark. We have the Women's fellowship and Sisters' Order for our women but no such order for men and young people. This could be a new way of affirming lay people in the Church.

Later on in the story, Mark left them and went to Pamphylia. Paul and Barnabas were doing great work but Mark simply disappeared. He just ran away. Next time when they were going on the Missionary Journey Barnabas wants to take Mark with them. Even Paul was willing to part from Paul in order to affirm the young man. Barnabas affirmed Paul earlier but now Paul was not wanting to affirm Mark. Later on in the Epistle Paul wrote about Mark saying that he is his son and the only one with him.

We need this kind of leadership today in the Church. This is where the leadership is on the edge. Full of Holy Spirit means you are on the edge of life, affirming and being positive all the time. No grudge and no fear. Barnabas had these qualities. No wonder the Apostle called him the son of Consolation.



God's Rule or Lord's Rule

(An Exposition of Psalm 146)

REV. DR. JESUDASON B. JEYARAJ* *Madurai*

Study of Psalms is interesting, enlightening and rewarding. Psalms are expressions of Israelite faith. They convey their reflections on their experience—their condition, crisis, joyful period and how God acted in their history in different poetic style and forms. It is believed that one can reconstruct the theology of the Old Testament from the book of Psalms even if the other books of the Old Testament are destroyed. Such is the richness of the psalms. Psalms are of different types—broadly speaking some of them are praises and some others are laments. Scholars like Gunkel, Mowinckel and Westermann have classified the psalms using Form-Critical method. Although it is difficult to declare the actual context of many psalms and scholars still struggle on to determine the context of the psalms, there is a common consensus that these psalms were used in the worship of ancient Israel. Encouraging our churches to identify different classes of people, places, key events, kinds of God's actions and theological ideas mentioned in them is necessary.

Unlike many other psalms, the Psalm 146 does not have a title or a note at its beginning stating the name of the author, kind of psalm and the musical instruments to be accompanied in singing it. Neither the context in which this psalm was written nor the particular day or festival in which it was used in Israelite cult is known to us. This makes the interpretation of this psalm difficult. It is true that this psalm can be called 'Halleluiahs Psalm' (a Psalm of Praise) as some commentators call it, based on the first part of the first verse and the last part of the last verse. They give exegetical comments on terms and phrases but they have failed to discuss its context or interpret it. I too do not know exactly when this psalm was written and in which context it is used. But I make an attempt here to place this psalm in the context of the monarchical period and try to interpret it because it reflects the increasing injustice and oppression which affected different groups of people in monarchical Israel (vv: 5-9) and the praising of the godly rule and rejection of worldly rule in Israel. It is my opinion that the writer of this psalm contrasts the nature of Yahweh's actions with the nature of the actions of the rulers who are wicked and worldly (v. 3) and thus presents two kinds of rule, one the nature of godly rule and the other, nature of worldly rule. The psalmist encourages the people that the godly rule is to be praised and trusted. This vision is to be captured when they sing this psalm in their worship, could be the intention of the author. So I would like to give the title 'God's Rule or Lord's Rule' to this Psalm.

It is true that the use of the word 'rule' is objectionable. But till we find a suitable alternative term, the use of this comprehensive word is unavoidable. Understanding this psalm in this sense, has theological relevance to the present-day leadership and administration.

I. Praise God : (vv: 1-2)

Praising God is an important element in worship. This psalm begins with an imperative 'Hallelu-yah', calling all the people who have gathered for worship to praise Yahweh. 'Yah' is a short form for the name of Yahweh which is repeated in v. 1 and v. 2. as the object of their praise. Praising is honouring, glorifying, appreciating, thanking and respecting God. By praising His name, the worshippers honour Yahweh's nature and appreciate his works for them. The call to praise Yahweh is followed by the reason to praise Him in many psalms (cf. Ps. 117, 136:1, 147:1, 13). But no reason is stated in Ps. 146:1-2. However, the reasons to praise him are indicated in verses 5-9 which describe his nature and actions. He reveals his actions in history through His servants who rule, administer and guide the Israelites. Such a rule reflecting God's nature and actions is godly and praiseworthy. Although people of Israel recognize and appreciate such a godly rule by a king, they give their praises to Yahweh rather than to the human King.

Verse 2 points out that praising God is not a one time activity and then stops. Rather, it continues as long as one is alive. Those who are dead cannot praise God and express their thankfulness. It is an opportunity as well as an obligation to praise God while one lives. The idea that man should praise God continuously and express his gratitude is emphasised by the repetitive parallelism of v. 2.

Praising God is certainly biblical and due importance for this element must be given in our worship. But praising must be meaningful and express our understanding of what God is doing in our society. In praising God, man realises the nature and work of God and this realization should be developed into a vision of God. Without creating proper vision of God in our congregation for which the element of praising is one of the helpful means, it is difficult to create a vision for humanity. Does the element of praising God create a vision of God in us and thereby a vision for man is a challenge to Christian worship and leadership?

II. Trusting God (vv. 3-6)

The purpose of trusting God, people and materials is to have security, get help and guidance. Some narratives,

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prophetic oracles and wisdom sayings in the Old Testament speak of men and women who trusted God and acted for him. In Ps. 146 : 3-6, trusting God is contrasted with trusting 'princes' and 'son of man'. Who are these princes? The Hebrew word for princes—*nedîbîm*—refers to men of rank and honour. Such people belong to the families of lords and nobles and have a prominent place in the royal court, administration, military and business. They represent worldly pomp and excellence, richness, power and position. This psalm warns that it is not wise to trust such princes. For, usually, princes side with princes and their help go in favour of the rich. Their policies and rule oppress the poor and needy rather than help them to get their justice, rights and welfare. Relying on their own motive, thinking, ways and means and power, they try to achieve their goals. They make use of their excellence and try to achieve their purposes at any cost. They are successful and their actions benefit the class of rich in the society.

Not only princes, but any human being, in general, cannot be trusted. 'Son of man' is a title to refer to all human beings. This symbolises the limited ability and fickleness of man. Since their existence is not certain and they may die at any time, human beings cannot be depended and trusted.

On the other hand, God of Jacob is dependable and trustworthy. The title 'God of Jacob' in the Old Testament usually means God of Israel. Yahweh can be trusted because he helps the poor and affected through his servants. Because of his nature, actions on behalf of the oppressed and eternal continuance, people can trust him and have a hope that such good values will be reiterated and continued. Trusting a god who does not have power to act and control events is useless. But v. 6 points out that he has the power to create the heaven, earth and all in them. The idea of creation is mentioned in connection with God's actions for people is to emphasise how God of Jacob is powerful to help anyone, accomplish anything and prove himself as faithful to those who trust him.

III. Understanding Godly Rule (vv. 7-9)

As one reads through verses 7-9, the reader can notice that these verses reflect Isa. 61 : 1-2 or the Nazareth manifesto in Luke 4 : 18-19 and how much the Israelite society suffered from injustice and oppression and longed for godly rule to prevail in their country and not the rule of the evil lords. Seven actions of God and the different weaker sections of Israelite society who benefit from God's help are listed in vv. 7-9. Before we look into each action of God, we must raise the question—how does God help the weaker sections of the society? He helps through the leaders who rule and administer the welfare of the people. This rule of committed leaders reflect actions in accordance with God's will in favour of the poor and powerless in contrast to the rule of the wicked rulers who use their excellence, position and power to become wealthy and help the rich to become more rich.

One of the important actions of God is executing justice of the oppressed (v. 7). Exploitation of the poor by the rich went on in Israelite society. The psalmist does not tell us what are these oppressions. But the oppressions of the poor and powerless is described as violent crushing or tyrannical dealing by the term *śak* in V. 7. Since oppression does not happen without planning, effort and force, as one finds in Micah 2 : 1-2, establishing justice also demands deliberate effort. The verb '*śah*'—'to make', 'to create' which is used in connection with

the creation of the heaven and earth at the beginning v. 6, is repeated in the beginning of v. 7 not only to enhance poetical style but to denote that God takes effort to justice for the oppressed.

Secondly, God's will is that no one should starve without food and go on begging for food. It is because of natural calamities, accumulation of wealth and storing of food, make profit and unfair distribution of food, many live in poverty and beg for food. God gives food for the hungry (v. 7). He did it in the wilderness journey of the Israelites by providing manna from the sky and sending food through ravens to the Prophet Elijah. But these are special situations. No one had stored food and denied the sharing of it in the wilderness of Sinai or when the whole country was under drought and famine for a period during the ministry of Elijah. God did miracles in the context of liberating the people and when resources lacked. But he expects the people who have food to share with those who starve. It is through people, God feeds the hungry. Godly rule is reflected in making fair policies of distribution of food and availing it for the poor.

Thirdly, God sets the prisoners free (v. 7) because they are powerless to free themselves on their own and live in pain and indignity under the control of human masters. The psalm does not make it clear whether it refers to the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt or Babylon or some individuals in the society. It is possible that their earliest historic liberation is remembered and expressed in the declaration. However, it is possible that the word for prisoners—'*sûrim*', can denote those who became slaves to the oppressor or anyone bonded by an oath or vow. Godly rule which favours the weaker sections of the people identify the prisoners, take effort to free them from their masters, restore their rights and properties and bring the oppressors to correction or punishment. But the rule based on worldly values supports the oppressor and force people to throw themselves as slaves to the cruelty of the rich and powerful.

Fourthly, since there is no miracle of God opening the eyes of the blind in the literal sense is reported in the Old Testament, the word 'blind' is used in the figurative sense (v. 8). It refers to those who have accepted their hopeless condition of life and unable to see a ray of hope of enjoying freedom, dignity and welfare. Their eyes of ignorance of their rights and unawareness of the ways and means by which injustice is done to them need to be opened. It is true that the eyes of the oppressors also need to be opened to see the consequences of their injustice. But this psalm is speaking of those who are affected by injustice and oppression and therefore opening the eyes of the blind here refers to the exploited people. When the priests have failed to open the eyes of the affected by telling their rights from Torah and the kings by making policies on behalf of the blind, God raised the prophetic instruction to warn the oppressors and educate the poor and thus opening their eyes to the injustice done to them. Rule based on God's will constantly educate the afflicted and bring awareness about the injustice.

Fifthly, one can notice that coolies who load and unload vehicles coming with heavy parcels and sacs of material by carrying on their back for a number of years walk bent. They look bent is obvious to our sight. But the other group of people who are bent in the society are not due to carrying load on their back but due to humiliation and ill-treatment. They are humiliated because they lose their property and live as slaves, their dignity due to raping or discrimination of race or caste and called outcasts or untouchables. They are so humiliated that they are unable to lift up their head and walk in freedom and live

with dignity in the midst of others. While the rule of vested interest humiliate others and let down people to live in distress and indignity, the rule in line with God's requirements lifts up such humiliated people by rendering justice and restoring their dignity (v. 8).

Sixthly, sojourners are the landless people who lived in the midst of the Israelites. Some of the sojourners in Israel could be the Canaanites who lost their land and the others who came from other countries. Since they do not have the status of citizen but refugee and belong to other race, they are vulnerable to the attack of the majority natives. They feel insecure in somebody's land. They need protection, care and security of the people of the land (v. 9). God's wish is that the rule in Israel should protect sojourners as he protected the Israelites when they were sojourners in Egypt.

Finally, God upholds widows and orphans, for they are helpless, dependent and exposed to ill-treatment and oppression (v. 9). Such people need special care and protection. If a rule in Israel expresses all the above concerns, then it reveals the godly nature of rule and administration. God wants this kind of rule to go on and not the 'way of the wicked' (v. 9) which is opposite to the nature of God's rule. The 'way' means the plans, policies and methods of actions of the wicked which oppress people, make people to serve, put them in bondage, block out information on rights, welfare and the struggles and achievements of socio-economically and politically downtrodden people, exploit the sojourners, widows and fatherless. Since God does not like such evils in the society, he challenges, controls and destroys such plans, policies and operation through the righteous. That is why, he loves the righteous (v. 8).

V. Affirming Godly Rule

The statement 'Yahweh rules for ever' which usually appears in the enthronement Psalms (Ps. 93 : 1 ; 97 : 1,

99 : 1) is seen at the end of this psalm (v.10). Scholarly discussions on the phrase '*malak Yahweh*' ('*Yahweh reigns/rules*') focus mainly on the question of grammatical construction of the phrase and the enactment of enthronement festival in ancient Israel. How can we interpret this statement? The psalmist does not end the psalm with the portrayals of two kinds of rule but concludes it with an affirmation 'Yahweh will rule for ever'. I assume, when worshipping, community declare this statement in singing, they affirm that godly rule should be established in each generation in Israel. It implies that they should reject the ungodly rule and administration and long for godly rule to prevail for ever in favour of the poor.

This kind of affirmation in their worship can be regarded as an initial step in establishing godly rule. For, it challenges the rulers and members of the community and reminds them that they should work for the godly rule by implementing all the standards required by Yahweh for the rule in Israel. The psalmist envisages here that the rule in Israel is a partnership of Yahweh, leaders and people.

The theology of this Psalm that God sides with the poor and wants such a rule to be exhibited through his servants and the people should constantly affirm godly rule and should not lose hope and compromise with the rule of the wicked leaders is relevant to our context today. This study raises questions such as what sort of rule and administration we exhibit today? Is it in favour of the poor or the rich? Who are the beneficiaries of the leadership—family members and relatives of the ruler or the downtrodden poor? The theology of leadership and administration portrayed by Ps. 146 is a challenge to our own leadership and administration particularly with reference to our churches, Christian institutions, social action groups and evangelistic organizations.

(Contd. from page 13)

Internal Refugees in the Philippines

'It all started in the morning of February 8, 1993,' related Evelyn Fajamilag. The guerilla New People's Army (NPA) and government troops were engaged in an armed clash at dawn. While the firefight went on another group of military men gathered the Bituan villagers to 'protect them from stray bullets.' It was the first time Bituan residents saw men in fatigue uniforms in their place.

'Then they started calling surnames. People were confused. It wasn't clear why those names were called. Some of us thought it was an opportunity for special work and extra money and volunteered to go. In all there were 12 of us. I was the only woman,' continues the 35 years old Evelyn.

The 12 were suspected as communist sympathisers. At the detachment a day and a night of terror commenced. They were interrogated individually. They were tortured.

'We were told to lie on the ground, faces down for five hours. They were mocking and shooting us between our legs. Six of us were ordered to swim in a mud pool and execute a duck wall while they were being shot. All for fun.'

'We were not given food to eat. Some of us were forced to chew hot peppers. Others were given cow dung. I was made to eat paper. The military walked around us, fell on us, spat on us, beat us.' The ordeal lasted from 8.00 a.m. until midnight.

Migrant Workers in Japan

A little known fact about industrially advanced Japan is that its phenomenal rate of progress can be attributed to one major factor—the high rate of its migrant labour force. Immigration authorities estimate over 1,00,000 foreigners mostly Asians (Thai, Philippines, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, etc.) are being employed (mostly illegally) in labour-short Japan. These workers are illegal because they have overstayed their visas. Small firms, medium firms and large companies employ foreign workers with the knowledge that they are undocumented.

According to a recent survey done by the Small, Medium Enterprises Accident Compensation Cooperation, this is because of two major reasons: (1) it is difficult to find Japanese workers for the kinds of low status jobs that migrant worker do and (2) employing foreign workers has the benefit of being able to provide low wages.

The illegal status of these worker makes them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. When their rights are violated, their wages not paid, or they need medical help, they do not seek help for fear of being deported. Most of the migrant workers work as day labourers or in factories. Those in factories have a regular job. They are subcontracted for six months at a time. Often contractors sell them to companies who exploit this labour by not paying them wages until their debts are paid. These workers have no written contracts and often do not know how much they will earn until they are paid.

Meeting God Among the Deserted

ASIA SUNDAY MAY 12, 1991

Every year on Asia Sunday, the Sunday before Pentecost, the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) invites churches to pray for one another and the people of Asia.

The theme of this year's Asia Sunday is the plight of millions of uprooted people in Asia: refugees, displaced persons and migrants. The involuntary movement of people is a growing disaster resulting from economic and political instability in the world. These days one can hardly pick-up a newspaper without reading some news of these up-rooted people in Asia.

The Gulf Crisis, just to mention a recent example, has uprooted thousands of migrant workers from Asia and perhaps an equal number of people who had to leave homes in search of safety.

Who are these up-rooted people?

Refugees and other uprooted people have been with us since the beginning of time. In the Bible many of God's people become refugees and are persecuted. Jesus Christ himself was a refugee.

In Asia there is hardly any country which is not affected by this tragedy.

For years, 3.5 million Afghan refugees have been waiting in Pakistan until peace is restored in their own country so they could return. More than a million Sri Lankan Tamils are victims of ethnic strife and displaced not only in their country but all over the world.

Hundreds of thousands migrant workers from the poorer countries in Asia are being exploited in more affluent countries. Internal politics and armed conflicts have resulted in the suffering and uprooting of people in the Philippines, India and Burma.

More than 10 years have passed since the first influx of Vietnamese boat-people and other refugees from Indo-China and still no appropriate solution has been found.

In addition to these relatively well-known refugee situations there are many more groups which have been uprooted, for instance refugees in Kashmir and Bangladesh. These people are all victims or survivors of unjust political structures, human rights violations and armed conflicts.

They are also part of God's people and have a claim on the churches.

What does the Bible say about refugees?

The Bible has many references to refugee ministry. Some include:

'When a stranger sojourns with you in your land you shall not do him wrong...you shall love himself as yourself' (Lev. 19 : 33-34).

'...for in as much as you have done it to the least of these, you have done it unto Me' (Matt. 25 : 40).

Especially in the old Testament God's people are examples of welcoming and ministering towards the stranger. The same traditional hospitality is also a part of our own Asian culture but as national borders get more sharply defined this hospitality is disappearing.

What is the Ministry of the churches?

It is only appropriate that through this Asia Sunday we are reminded of the plight of refugees, and of our responsibilities towards them.

In June 1990 a group of Church leaders from Asia came together and reflected on this very important ministry and gave amongst others the following recommendations:

- * critically analyse and understand the situation of up-rooted people;
- * help change refugee situations in line with human rights and justice and, as necessary, provide pastoral care on humanitarian programs.

The liturgy used for Asia Sunday hopefully will be a first step towards further reflection and analysis on refugee situations in our respective environments. Congregations which observe Asia Sunday may wish to send their May 12 collections to their national council of churches or the CCA to their further work among refugees in Asia.

The Christian Conference of Asia

The CCA, established in 1957, is an organ of cooperation among the Protestant churches in Asia. Believing that Christ is our 'peace' the CCA helps Asian churches pursue peace and build a just societies. The mission of God is understood through the experience and analysis of Asian humanity. To be involved in that mission authentically the Church must immerse itself in the stream of Asian suffering and collaborate with suffering people in their quest for freedom from all forms of enslavement and for fullness of life.

To assist churches in their Asia Sunday reflection on refugees CCA has compiled:

- * a liturgy prepared by the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka Commission for Justice and Peace;

* excerpts from reports on refugee situations prepared by the World Council of Churches Commission on Inter-Church Aid Refugee and World Service (CICARWS); and

* 'What it Means to be a Refugee', a summary of a document prepared by Australian Council of Churches World Christian Action.

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ASIA SUNDAY LITURGY

Foreword

The Liturgy for Asia Sunday 1991 on the theme 'Refugees' has been prepared in meditative form interweaving contemporary as well as biblical readings. Local churches are encouraged to supplement the given contemporary readings with those from their own background. The meditations are meant to be read slowly and since the contemporary readings are from newspapers these could be read as in a news bulletin or interpreted in dance and drama.

Those using the liturgy should note that it is designed as a journey through the wasteland of refugees who are the result of the actions on deserted minds. We journey through biblical deserts where we empty ourselves and ultimately meet God among the deserted.

OPENING HYMN

The make-Reflection shift shelter
in the desert,
in the nowhere land
between frontiers
of racial clashes
and political games,
is the symbol of the suffering people
dumped in wasteland
to waste away.
Deserted people,
with the desert as their refuge,
temporary for days
or months
or years,
are a permanent temporary solution
to temporary power politics.
Millions of people
are denied their homes,
denied their little possessions
robbed of their right
to a decent existence
among us.

CONTEMPORARY READINGS

Prayer :

Oh, Lord we remember
the forgotten in Asia.

MAY-JUNE 1991

We remember people displaced within their own countries : in Sri Lanka, those displaced by the Sinhala, Tamil ethnic conflict ; in Pakistan, those displaced by the Sindhi, Mohajir ethnic conflict ; in Bangladesh, those displaced by natural disaster ; in India, those displaced by communal violence in Punjab and Kashmir ; in the Philippines, those displaced by the unjust structures and violence of the State.

We remember the millions of refugees from Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Burma, Kampuchea and Vietnam forced to flee from their homes because of human rights violations and unjust socio-economic and political systems.

Lord the reality of
refugees is not just history
but history tells us
of people who were refugees
for decades, for thousands of years.
We remember and give thanks
that your history
has been a history of interventions
on behalf of refugees
and through refugees.

HYMN

Reflection :

Behind refugees
is always a disaster,
human made or not,
an experience
like the death camp in Egypt
a nightmare of killings
burning houses
burning bodies
and a flight
through nowhere-land
and a narrow escape from death,
from raging battles
with no sense
no cause
no end—
for those at the receiving end
at least.

CONTEMPORARY READINGS

Reflection :

Their new realities
are the pursuing past ;
settled in the nowhere
to stay unsettled.
With no way back
with no way forward,
with no way to sidestep
their misery.
Physically forgotten
they struggle for
a bottle of water
for a can of food—
to maintain their nonexistence.

Bible Readings :

Exodus 14 : 11-12

They said to Moses ' Weren't there any graves in Egypt ?
Did you have to bring us out here in the desert to die ?
Look what you have done by bringing us out of Egypt ?
Didn't we tell you before we left that this would happen ?

'We told you to leave us alone and let us go on being slaves of the Egyptians. It would be better to be slaves there than to die here in the desert.'

Exodus 15 : 22-24

Then Moses led the people of Israel away from the Red Sea into the desert of Shur. For three days they walked through the desert, but found no water. Then they came to a place called Marah, but the water there was so bitter that they could not drink it. That is why it was named Marah. The people complained to Moses and asked 'What are we going to drink?'

Exodus 16: 2, 3

There in the desert they all complained to Moses and Aaron and said to them, 'we wish that the Lord had killed us in Egypt. There we could at least sit down and eat meat and as much other food as we wanted. But you have brought us out into this desert to starve us all to death'.

Reflection :

It is we,
the settled,
who need the deserts
to be saved from our fancy world
to be saved from our fancy lives
to settle the burning problems,
the unsettled questions,
the postponed solutions,
The deserts are made—
refugees are dumped—
by our minds.
Our minds are the very waste lands,
deserted of the will-power
to suffer for what is right,
honest and true.

Bible Reading

'The Lord of the desert':
Luke 5 : 16
But he often withdrew to the wilderness
for prayer.

Prayer :

Lord
I need to be in the desert
I need to be on trial
I need to be stripped of all
that is unnecessary.
I need to be free
to encounter you
in the deserted land
in my heart,
to encounter the ultimate,
you who concerns are most,
to find the riches
I have been looking for
and not found anywhere.

I need to see you in the desert.
I need the desert
to find you
among the deserted
among the lost
among the crucified
for the sins of others.

Blessing :

The Lord
be with you.
He was a victim
of injustice.
He was a victim
of political schemes.
He was a victim of
false propaganda.
He was a victim
of the truth he stood for.
He was deserted
as he sought refuge
among us.
He was rejected
but lives with God
forever.

CONTEMPORARY READINGS

It could Have Been Me

A Lankan housemaid returns from Bahrain and loads her hired car with all the goods and baggage she had brought back for herself and her family. Yards away looking intently are Lankan housemaids who had gone to work in Kuwait and who had been lucky enough to have escaped and returned home with only their lives and their meagre belongings. At least 46,000 Tamils who took refuge in the premises of the Eastern University refugee camp had fled by yesterday following threats, residents or Batticaloa said.

A senior Army Officer based in the Batticaloa administrative district confirmed the vacation of the refugee camps. By yesterday all inmates of the camps had fled into the jungles or their villages. According to residents in Batticaloa over 40,000 Tamils sought protection in the premises of the Eastern University when fierce fighting broke out between the Sri Lankan army and Tigers in early June. Sources placed the number of Tamils at the camp at 46,000 before threats forced the Tamils to flee.

Kuwait Invasion : Many Asians Stranded in No Man's Land

Most Asians remained stranded under the scorching heat in no man's land, a bleak 70-kilometre strip of stony desert between Iraq and Jordan where the buses dumped them. Two makeshift tent cities grew almost overnight, the number of people doubling every other day during the first weeks. Conditions were worst in camp 1 where 30,000 people suffered hot days and chilly nights, dust sandstorms and scorpions, with no latrines, no garbage collection and little water and food. As soon as some moved to Amman, others took their place.

'We are allowed one bucket of water daily per person' said Mohammed Rauf Ali, a Sri Lankan marooned with his family. 'We have many women in our group and they need more water'.

'In 20 years of work with refugees I've never seen something like this,' says Dr. Xavier Emmanuelli, vice chairman of Medecins Sans Frontieres, the French relief organisation in charge of the camp. 'Usually, refugees are rural people, but these are urban citizens with many survival skills, used to a life where food and water are wasted and each person tends to his or herself.'

'We had no food, no water. Then a miracle happened. A nice Iraqi lieutenant had a radio. He radioed and got one of the armoured tanks to pull our vehicles. We asked for water as we hadn't a drop. At first he said he couldn't help us but when he realised that we would die he agreed to give us 'bathing water'. We drank it. It was like wine! We didn't mind the soapy taste. He told us that we had another 100 km to Saudi. We were tired and cared. That night the Iraqi officers allowed us to stay near their covered vehicle. The night was hot. We saw searchlights scanning the sky. I thought of my family and I prayed. The night sky was studded with stars. At 4.00 a.m. it became cool.'

Racist Terrorism

The naked racist terrorism is well demonstrated by the recent order to Muslims of the Northern Province to move out of the province. According to our report large numbers of Muslims have begun vacating their homes and are seeking protection in army camps. The militants have exorted jewellery and robbed them of their other valuables, the report said.

Widow Aged 47

The plight of men and young boys in our area is terrible. My husband was one of the victims of terror. He was taken for questioning and it was said that he will be sent back. He never returned. We have no choice when it comes to the arrest of our menfolk. We have no recourse to any law or the intervention of any officials. We let them take away and we never see them again.

Widow, 16 Years Old

I got married five months ago. When they took him away for questioning I was fortunate enough to see him back alive unlike other wives. But I never thought that those were his final hours. The very next day when we were having dinner a gang dragged him out of the house and I never saw him again. My hopes and dreams of married life are shattered.

Widow about 27 Years Old

I have two children, I also have to look after both his and my parents. I don't want to believe that he is dead. But he has not been seen since. That's the plight of young boys and men in this conflict. Hundreds and hundreds of women are undergoing this terrible situation.

Vietnamese in Southeast Asia

A refugee boat with 45 people was attacked by pirates in the Gulf of Thailand on its way to safety in an asylum country in Southeast Asia. An elderly man and a young boy were the only survivors of this horrifying attack. Eleven women including several teenagers were abducted and are assumed to have been raped and left to die. It was one of the worst attacks for years.

Five persons were shot and wounded when about 10,000 Vietnamese refugees in a camp in Thailand staged a violent protest last February. They were protesting over a plan to transfer them to another camp because they were afraid that from there they would be forced back to Vietnam.

Ten year old Le Van Quy arrived in Hong Kong on 10th June 1989 after a month-long journey from Vietnam via China's Hainan island. Since then he has been living in confinement in a detention centre for boat-people run by police, thousands of kilometres from his parents and

siblings. His father was a serviceman under the old South Vietnamese Government. Both his parents were too old to flee but they gave him some money and arranged his escape with relatives. Quy said his parents told him never to go back to Vietnam, or they would be sent to jail. At Hainan Island, however, the passengers changed to a bigger boat and his relatives disappeared. Quy is one of the 2,500 unaccompanied minors languishing in Hong Kong's camps. His future will be decided by the guiding principal of the best interest of the child and the unity of the family. However, how can you repatriate unaccompanied minors if the Vietnamese Government or their parents refuse to accept them?

Afghan Refugees in Pakistan

Women are particularly traumatised by life in exile. There has been a sharp deterioration in women's health—both physical and mental—with frequent symptoms of stress and depression. Fundamental and contradictory social changes have taken place among women.

On the one hand purdah (the Muslim veil used to prevent women being seen) has often been reinforced in the camps, partly as a reassertion of traditional values in the face of adversity and because of the presence of unknown men. Such accentuation of purdah has severely limited women's social contact and reduced the possibilities of education for girls.

On the other hand many women-widows in particular—have been forced by circumstances to take on a more independent role. They have become important income earners and in some cases household heads and the main breadwinners. In the past this would have been inconceivable. Widows would have been catered for within the extended family. For example, Nafas Jedad, a 20 year old mother of five children from northern Afghanistan, runs a nursery school for orphans whose parents have been killed in the fighting or through mujahideen rocketing. 'The women in the refugee camps don't know about human rights, education or working outside the home. They have never been given the chance. We want women to be part of social life', she said.

Refugees and Displaced Persons in Myanmar/Burma

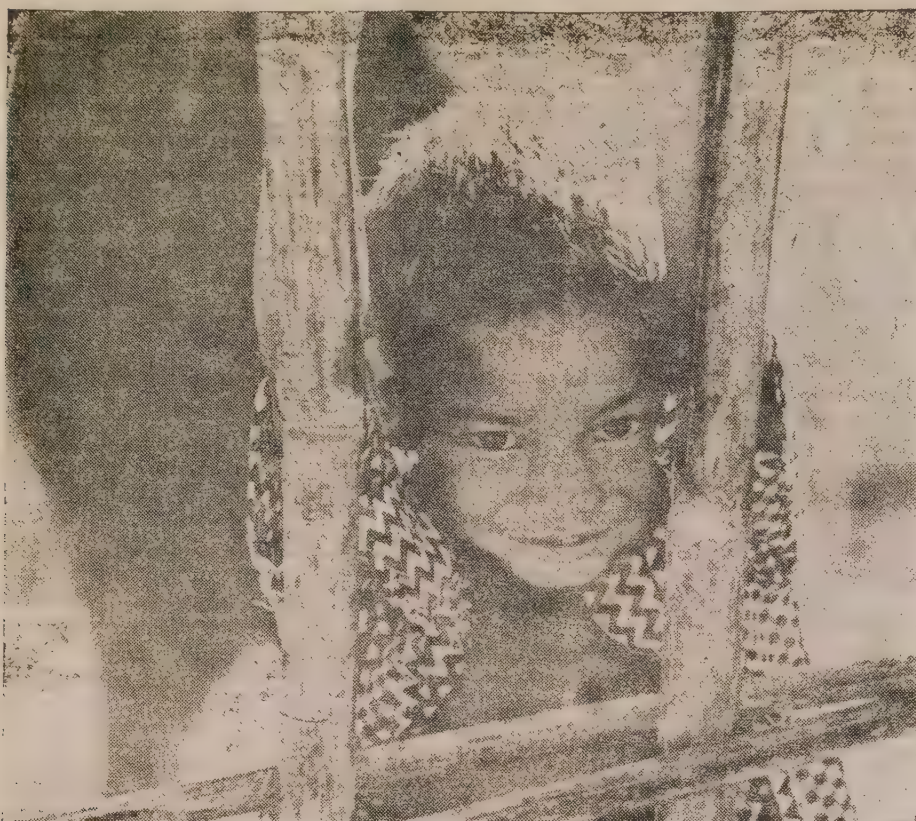
The Burmese people have suffered much during the past 28 years where they learned to expect sudden arrests, imprisonment without trial and loss of property.

Many people who have raised a voice in protest against the military government's policies have found themselves in detention or had to leave their homes as displaced persons or refugees.

The sun rises and sets over the villages in Burma. Every sunrise and every sunset bring more experiences of pain and agony to the villagers who struggle to survive here in these fields of slaughter which, at times, sound so peaceful and calm in the morning mist. Each time you see the sun rising and setting, think about those things you wish for your children, for your brothers and sisters, for your parents and relatives. The people in these villages have the same wishes for peace, happiness, prosperity, freedom and dignity.

Your peace and happiness depends on their peace and happiness. Together we can halt the progress of the forces of evil and give birth to the smile of peace.

(Contd. on p. 9)



This year make
a friend who will
love you forever

Everybody loves to have a friend. Alok is one. Thousands of children like him need caring friends who will love them. Some are orphans. Many are poorly nourished. All of them struggle in poverty and loneliness.

You can make a friend

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Review Institutes on Education for Theological Teachers

DR. W. A. F. HOPPER,* Madras.

2.0 Background

About 20 years back Dr. Sam Amirtham invited me to conduct an Evaluation Workshop in Theological Education at TTS, Madurai. Later, Dr. Victor Premagar recommended me to the Serampore Board of Theological Education as a Resource Person for Summer Institutes in Education for selected teachers from affiliated Theological Colleges. I was involved in the institutes during three summers at UTC, UBS and KTC, organised by Dr. Henry Wilson. Dr. C. L. Furtado and Dr. J. S. Sadananda invited me to conduct a 5-day Pedagogical Institute at KTC, Mangalore from 15.4.91 to 19.4.91. I am glad that Dr. Sadananda is planning to organize a follow-up institute on Evaluation in Theological Education. To me conducting these institutes have been a great learning experience. There has been professional growth evidenced in me from institute to institute. The insights gained in conducting one institute were used to plan for a better one and so on. In this process, the recent one at Mangalore organised by Dr. J. S. Sadananda attempted to evolve creative models of Instructional Technology as applied to Theological Education at B. D. level.

3.0 Use of Taxonomies of Educational Objectives

The well-known Bloom's Cognitive Domain Taxonomy and Krathwohl's Affective Domain Taxonomy were used at the Institute. Both the taxonomies were accepted as a feasible base for the following:

(a) to develop curriculum and instructional objectives in the cognitive and affective areas of Human Resources development through various courses of study offered in Theological Colleges.

(b) to plan for expected learning outcomes as cognitive abilities (under the different taxonomic levels) to be attained by theological students in the class-room and in the field.

(c) to plan for expected indicators of value development as students are involved in learning experiences in the class-room and in different situations in the environment.

(d) to structure appropriate class-room questions to facilitate the learning process in the class-room.

(e) to develop different types of measuring instruments and assessment scales for formative and summative evaluation.

It was felt that research should be undertaken to evolve an Integrated Taxonomy of Educational Objectives to reflect adequately the vision of Theological Education as contemplated recently by the Serampore Board while revising Courses of Study at the B.D. level.

3.0 Instructional Technology

The scope of the institutes was restricted to the following

(a) to equip the teachers with selected teaching-skills

(b) to enable them to plan for effective teaching-learning strategies.

3.1 Teaching Skills

The following were selected out of a list containing 20 skills (S1 to S20)

S1 : Structuring Class-room Questions (SCQ). S2 : Probing Questioning (PQ). S3 : Fluency in Questioning (FQ). S4 : Reinforcement (Re). S5 : Illustrating with Examples (IWE). S6 : Stimulus Variation (SV). S7 : Explaining (Ex).

The skills were learnt through a Micro-Teaching Approach which consisted of the following steps :

Step 1 : explaining the components of a skill

Step 2 : demonstrating the skill through a micro-lesson

Step 3 : obtaining the feed-back (quantitative and qualitative) through a matrix.

Step 4 : discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the micro-lesson.

Step 5 : Reteaching and Refeedback (if necessary)

3.2 Micro-Lessons

The Micro-lessons were prepared on concepts selected from Theology subjects by the teachers for a time limit of about 5 to 6 minutes focusing on only one skill at a time. They were tried out on the peers in a small group of 4 to 5. The observers did the rating on a 7-point scale and later compiled in the form of a matrix on the black-board for reflexion.

* Dr. W.A.F Hopper is the Director of the CSI Synod Council for Education. He was formerly serving in the NCERT in different capacities.

The lessons prepared on *SCQ* indicated the classification based on the cognitive domain taxonomy for each question as follows :

LOQ : Low Order Question

MOQ : Middle Order Question

HOQ : High Order Question

It was an enjoyable exercise to practise skills under stimulated condition in the institutes.

3.3 Mini-Teaching

Lessons were done for a duration of about 15 minutes on the following :

(a) Asking Questions in the class-room (AQ)

(b) Lecture-Discussion (LD)

Asking questions in the class-room focused on Probing-Questioning (PQ). PQ had the components of Prompting, Seeking Further Information, Refocusing and Increasing Critical Awareness. The theological teachers were unanimous in accepting PQ as an appropriate mode with *SCQ* and *FQ* being subsumed into it.

The Lecture-Discussion had the skills of Explaining and Asking Questions as the major components. The other component skills were Reinforcement, Illustrating with Examples, Stimulus Variation and the Use of the Black-Board. The lessons prepared by the participants were tried-out among themselves. The post-lesson discussion was done to analyse the strengths and the weaknesses and to suggest alternate strategies to result in more effective learnings.

4.0 Evaluation of Student-Developments

Training was given to the theological teachers in all the institutes except the last one held at KTC, Mangalore.

The Serampore College supplied the question-papers for B.D. degree examination for use at the institute. The scheme of internal assessment was also made available to the institute for critical study.

An attempt was made to develop approaches and techniques for evaluating the major dimensions of human development in a comprehensive manner.

4.1 Criterion-Referenced Testing

The cognitive abilities developed in the theology students at the B.D. level were used for writing a variety of test-items and questions. Teachers were equipped with skills to write quality items and questions to fulfil evolved criteria.

4.2 Preparing Question-Papers

The question-papers set by the Board were analysed on the basis of criteria used for evaluating educational measuring instruments. On the basis of evolved criteria, question-papers were developed on scientific lines.

4.3 Formative and Summative Evaluation

This was an area which was discussed also with members of the Board. The Teachers were trained in developing Scheme for Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation students for all the years of their stay in the college campus.

5.0 Suggestions

There is a great awakening among Theologians involved in teaching that they need to be trained on aspects of Education Technology relevant to Theological Education Colleges at B.Th. and B.D. levels. Therefore, Theological Colleges have to be equipped with better infrastructural facilities in terms of hard-wave and soft-wave in due course. There is also a great need to develop 'Core group' as Resource from among the Theologians themselves. They may be made available to Theological Colleges for the professional development of their faculty. Short-term training courses of about three days may be organised for the faculty of Theological Colleges on aspects of Instructional and Evaluation Technology in a sequential manner so that reasonable levels of competence may be attained by them. During the intervening periods, the staff should be guided to undertake practical work with their regular students. This would enable them to apply what they had learnt in real class-room situations and develop thereby professionally.

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My Exposure to Ecumenism

MISS SYLVIA JEYAKUMAR* Madurai

As a young person who participated in the Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Canberra, Australia, from 2 - 20th February, 1991, let me share some of my observations and impressions.

The Pre-Assembly Youth Event (PAYE) started on Feb. 2nd evening with a cultural show by the Australian Aborigines (in fact, there was an opening worship). It was very fascinating to see their rich cultural expressions imitating the Kangaroos, blowing the didgeridu, etc. But the presence of guitar and keyboard and drums and the singing of pop songs by these Aborigines reflected the influence of the western culture (the immigrant white culture).

Though there were 300 participants in the PAYE, there were times when I felt lost in the crowd and isolated. Later I found that almost all those who were exposed to the WCC for the first time felt the same. Some of the discussions in the PAYE itself were like WCC Assembly plenary sessions—with lots of motions, points of orders and voting. As a young person and quite new to all these bureaucratic proceedings I felt that though they were disgusting often sometimes they were interesting. Yet there were instances when interesting papers were presented by youth from different countries and different denominational backgrounds which gave lots of insights. The talk on the history of the ecumenical youth movement and its future by Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios was useful and gave an idea about the trend of the ecumenical youth movement. The group discussions—both as regional groups and as sub-theme groups—gave us a chance to share our joys and sorrows, our struggles and vision. The theme Come Holy Spirit, Renew the whole Creation was discussed through 4 sub-themes—Giver of Life—Sustain your creation, Spirit of Truth set us Free, Spirit of Unity—Reconcile your people, Holy Spirit—Transform and Sanctify Us. All the issues faced by the youth globally, regionally and locally were discussed based on these 4 sub-themes.

After the closing worship of the PAYE on Feb. 5th afternoon began the orientation programme for stewards. As a steward working in the plenary, my responsibility began on the 6th, even though the Assembly was inaugurated on the 7th. Some of the main tasks of the plenary stewards were distribution of documents to nearly 800 people, distribution of head-sets, voting cards, 'right to speak' cards. The first day was very exciting as we helped the delegates find their seats. They were seated according to the alphabetical order of churches (there

are more than 300 member churches of different denominations in the WCC !!) It is also very interesting to note that the WCC (and also we) is striving towards unity amidst these differences and diversities.

The WCC Seventh Assembly focused its attention on two main topics; one, the gulf crisis and two, the indigenous people and their land rights issue. Regarding the gulf issue, the Assembly demanded the immediate pull-out of Iraq troops from Kuwait. Also it demanded the pull-out of US-led military from the Arabian peninsula. Furthermore, the Assembly condemned Foreign occupation of any regions had demanded the pull-out of all foreign forces from all regions. Regarding the indigenous people's issue, the Assembly demanded that the Aboriginal people be included in all policy-making bodies. Moreover, it was resolved to have an aboriginal Desk in the WCC. Though, the environmental issue was discussed in a number of sessions, it was over-shadowed by the gulf issue and the indigenous people's issue.

One of the main things I observed in the Assembly proceedings was that in the initial stages of the Assembly, there were lots of individual presentations which consumed more time allowing very little time for discussions. Another observation is that there was too much of talking but very little of real action. Statements were made on important issues such as the declaration of WCC in solidarity with those who are poor and oppressed. It is very easy to talk about war, peace, justice, preservation of our eco-system etc., etc. But when it comes to action, it becomes very, very difficult and most of us are reluctant to sacrifice even a bit of the luxury enjoyed.

One of the most inspiring presentations on the theme was the one made by prof. Chung Hung Kyung, from Korea. I personally felt very much impressed by the way she related the traditional ideas about the spirit, and the invocation of the spirits of all those had tragic ends. She also pointed out that when people began to build the tower of Babel, language became a barrier. But on the day of the Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was acting upon the people, it unified the whole church. Language served to be a unifying tool. Hence unity is not a struggle for uniformity, but the symbol of understanding, acceptance and mutual respect.

Compared to the youth participation, women's participation was very good. As a youth participant, I felt discrimination showed against young people. The youth representation, on the whole, was lesser than that in the Vancouver Assembly (From 13% to 11%). In the central committee of the WCC, the representation of youth is only 8% as against the permitted quota of 20%. Hence

* Miss Sylvia is a student doing III B.A. Social Sciences at Lady Doreen College, Madurai.

the young people made a protest against the Report of the Nominations Committee and voiced their fear that such a trend would lead to 'an ecumenical suicide' with no future ecumenical generation. It was also pointed out that more number of young people in the west are leaving the churches never to return since the churches are not recognising them. Yet another unique feature of this Seventh Assembly is the appointment of a young person as one of the Presidents of WCC. She is from Sri Lanka, Asia region. But personally, I am skeptical about it as I wonder whether it is an eye-wash.

Though the youth were disappointed with such instances, we were very happy to have got a chance to meet as an ecumenical group. We were glad to share our stories of joy and sorrows, our struggles and vision. And we believe and hope that this struggle towards ecumenical unity will continue and provide enough room for others to contribute.

Let me share with you some of the challenges thrown before the WCC participants.

- (i) Work towards the development of a culture of life and not a culture of death.
- (ii) Strive towards inter-relatedness and not dualism.
- (iii) Unity does not mean uniformity. Struggle for unity means the development of understanding, acceptance and mutual respect.
- (iv) When we say that we are working for peace and justice, two options are there :
 - a. to feel good — by which we can very easily say that we support or condemn certain actions and feel good.
 - b. to do good — which involves sacrifice of a few things we love to possess for the sake of others. The choice is before us.

As a youth, I would also like to keep these challenges front of you. The choice is yours. Let the Holy Spirit guide us in our aspiration for oneness in purpose.

Come Holy Spirit, Renew the Whole Creation and Me Too

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Sermon Outlines for July 1991

7th July 1991

Theme : THE CHURCH

LESSONS :

<i>Exodus</i>	19, 1-8	<i>1 Peter</i>	2, 1-10
<i>Psalms</i>	87	<i>Matthew</i>	16, 13-19
<i>Isaiah</i>	43, 8-13	<i>Matthew</i>	18, 1-20

Church is New Testament's translation of Greek 'ecclesia', which always means an assembly of people and cannot mean a building. Ecclesia occurs three times, once in Matthew 16, 18 and twice in Matthew 18, 17. Although ecclesia does not occur elsewhere in the Gospels, the Messianic community appears under other designations. It is the 'flock' of Matt. 26, 31, and the 'little flock' of Luke 12, 32.

Ecclesia is first used of the Christian Community which had been gathered at Jerusalem by the preaching of the apostles (Acts 5, 11, 8, 1-3). This community consisted of those who, with the Apostles, had accepted the belief that Jesus was the Messiah, had been baptised and had received the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2, 37-41).

As Christianity spreads from Jerusalem outwards, ecclesia acquires two distinguishable meanings. It is used in the singular in the sense of a local Christian community, as it had in the earlier chapters been applied to the original church at Jerusalem 11, 26 ; 13, 1 ; 47, 27, 19, 3 (Antioch in Syria), 18, 22, (Caesarea) and 20, 17 Ephesus. It can also be used in the plural of a number of such local Christian communities as in 15, 41 ; 16, 5. But the word can also be used in a wider sense in the singular of the 'whole church' as far as it then existed in Judaea, Galilee and Samaria (9, 31).

The Old Testament, Exodus 19, introduces the solemnity of the giving of the law upon Mount Sinai. Some have well observed that the *Old Testament Church* is said to be borne upon eagle's wings (Exodus 19, 4), but the *New Testament Church* is said to be gathered by the Lord Jesus, as a hen gathers her chicken under her wings (Matt. 23, 37), denoting the grace and compensation and humiliation of the redeemer.

The New Testament lesson, 1 Pet. 2, 1-10, adds a new dimension to the understanding of the Church. The apostle is recommending the Christian church and the Constitution to the dispersed Jews. The Church is a much nobler fabric than the Jewish temple ; it is a living temple. Christ, the foundation, is a living stone. Christians are lively stones, and they are a holy priesthood. All sincere Christians have in them a principle of spiritual life communicated to them from Christ ; not dead in trespasses and sins, but alive to God. The Church of God is a spiritual house. All Christians are a holy priesthood. This holy priesthood must and will offer up spiritual sacrifices to God.

14th July 1991

Theme : THE SACRAMENTS

LESSONS :

<i>Exodus</i>	16, 11-15	<i>Romans</i>	6, 1-11
<i>Psalms</i>	105, 37-45	<i>John</i>	6, 47-58
<i>Ezekiel</i>	36, 22-38	<i>Mark</i>	6, 30-44

The lessons chosen for this Sunday speak about the two important sacraments *i.e.* Baptism and Eucharist.

In the Church of New Testament times the ceremony of baptism was the only and the indispensable means of becoming a member of the Christian Church. It was his incorporation into the body of Christ, with whose death and resurrection he was not identified. Before baptism catechumens were given careful instruction in the faith (Gal. 6, 9) and at their baptism were required to make public profession of it in the presence of the congregation (Rom. 10, 9f ; 1 Cor. 12, 3 ; Phil. 2, 11).

There is only one baptism in the Church of Christ just as there is one Lord one faith, one Father, one spirit and one body (Eph. 4, 4). All Christian baptism is baptism in Holy Spirit (Mk. 1, 8 ; Matt. 3, 11 ; Acts 15 ; 11, 16).

The practise of infant baptisms is a natural and inevitable expression of the faith of the Church of New Testament days. The solidarity of the family or the household would mean in baptism when the head of the household took a decisive step, he committed every member of his house (Acts 16, 15 ; 1 Cor. 1, 16). There is no place for our modern individualism in biblical thinking ; we do not live unto ourselves ; the faith of one is available for those who are unable as yet to express their own faith. (Acts 16, 19-34.) Our baptism carries in it a great reason why we should die to sin and live to righteousness. (Rom. 6)

The Eucharist, everytime it is offered, bears witness not only to history, but also to an interpretation of history. It is the proclamation of the saving death of Christ (1 Cor. 11, 26). Participation in the Eucharist implies a corporate sharing of a common salvation. The passage suggests that the one loaf and common cup, being communion in the body and blood—in the person and life—of Christ, are the means of sustaining unity and not merely the expression of the unity. In the Eucharist the three great themes of human religious aspiration in all times and cultures are finally and satisfyingly fulfilled reconciliation, offering and communion.

The Old Testament lesson, Exodus 16, 11-15 ; speaks about the discontent and murmuring of the people and God's gracious care shown to them by providing their needs, specially by providing *manna*. Let us set ourselves to think (i) of that great power of God, which fed Israel in the wilderness and made miracles their daily bread and (ii) of that constant providence of God. The same

wisdom, power and goodness shown in the *Spiritual feeding* of the Holy Eucharist where Christ offered himself *as the bread and the wine*.

21st July 1991

Theme : THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

LESSONS :

2 Chronicles	30, 1-9	Ephesians	2, 11-22
Psalms	133	John	17, 20-26
Ezekiel	37, 15-28	1 Corinthians	3

The Church is the church of God in Christ Jesus (cf. 1 Thess. 2, 14), it is God's church, not ours, something God creates, not we. Men, did not found the church, nor can they found a new church (cf. 1 Cor. 3, 11). There is only one church of God, the one of which Christ's apostles were the foundation members. There can be only one church because there is only one Christ (Eph. 4, 5), one body of Christ, one spirit (1 Cor. 12, 13). Christ is not divided (1 Cor. 1, 13) and therefore he cannot have two or more bodies ; there cannot be two or more churches.

St. Paul recoils with horror from the news that denominations have sprung up in Corinth—a Paul-party, an Apollos-Church, a Cephas-denomination, a Christ-party! (1 Cor. 1, 12 ; 3, 5). Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptised in the name of Paul? If the Church of the baptised is the persona of Christ, it is a body with many and varied organs, but it cannot be two bodies (Rom. 12, 4-8 ; 1 Cor. 12, 12). Christians were called in one body (Col. 3, 15).

In the Gospel lesson we have Jesus' prayer for the unity. The oneness that is between the Father and the son, which is mentioned again and again. It is taken for granted that the father and son are one, one in mutual endearments. The intimacy of this oneness is expressed in these words, *thou in me, and I in thee*. This is insisted on in Christ's prayer for his disciples oneness.

Believers are one in some measure as God and Christ are one ; they are united by divine nature, by the power of divine grace, in pursuance of the divine counsels. It is a holy union for holy ends ; not a body politic for any secular purpose.

The Creator and Redeemer are one in interest and design ; but to what purpose are they so, if all believers be not one body with Christ, and do not jointly receive grace from him, as he has received it for them? The words, *I in them, and thou in me*, show that the union is so necessary to the very being of his Church. Union with God through him, *thou in me*, so as by me to be in them. Union with each other, resulting from these words ; that they hereby may be made perfect in one.

He pleads the happy influence their oneness would have upon others. This is twice urged (v. 21). Believers must know what they believe and why they believe it. The uniting of Christians in love and charity invites others to join with them. Worldly glory sets men at variance ;

for if some be advanced others are eclipsed. The more Christians are taken up with the glory Christ has given them the less desirous they will be of vain glory, and consequently the less disposed to quarrel which lead them to divisions.

28th July 1991

Theme : THE WITNESS OF THE CHURCH

LESSONS :

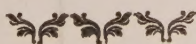
Isaiah	52, 7-10	Romans	10, 11-17
Psalms	150	Matthew	10, 24-33
Isaiah	55, 1-5	Acts	10, 34-43

Every Christian is called to be the witness to all the nations. As we need in the first lesson the removal of the Jews from Babylon, and the application of v. 7 to the preaching of the gospel (by the apostle from 10, 15) plainly intimates that that deliverance was a type and figure of the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ. This is the good news one has to communicate and bear witness.

It is here spoken of as a great blessing which ought to be welcomed with joy. Those that bring the tidings of their release shall be very acceptable (v. 7). This must be applied to the preaching of the gospel, which is proclamation of peace and salvation ; it is gospel indeed, good news of victory over our spiritual enemies and liberty from our bondage. The good news is that the Lord Jesus reigns. Christ himself brought these tidings first (Lk. 4, 18 ; Heb. 2, 3) and of him the text speaks : How beautiful are his feet, his feet that were nailed to the cross, how beautiful upon Mount Calvary?

In another lesson, Isaiah 55, 1-5, we have much of the covenant of grace made with us in Christ. The ' sure mercies of David ', which are promised here (Ver. 3) are applied by the apostle to the benefits which flow to us from the resurrection of Christ (Acts. 13, 34). (i) A free and gracious invitation to all to come and take the benefit of gospel grace. (ii) pressing arguments to enforce this invitation (2-4). (iii) A promise of the success of this invitation among the Gentiles (v. 5). All these aspects form into a witness to the people.

One of the pre-requisites of witnessing is to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Saviour. This acknowledgement may bring problems and sufferings. This is what we have in the gospel lesson (Matt. 10, 24-33). All these verses relate to the sufferings of Christ's ministers in their work, which they are taught here to expect, and prepare for ; they are directed also how to bear them, and how to go on, with their work in the midst of them. Jesus tells them what they should suffer and from whom. What they should suffer : hard things to be sure for, Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. And what may a flock of poor, helpless, unguarded sheep expect, in the midst of a herd of ravenous wolves, but to be worried and torn? They are as sheep among wolves, that is frightful, but Christ sends them forth, for he that sends them forth will protect them, and bear them out. In spite of all difficulties we have we are called to be his witnesses and Jesus will be with us in our ministry.





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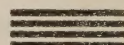
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